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THE MOUNTAINS OF MOROCCO : THE HIGH ATLAS.

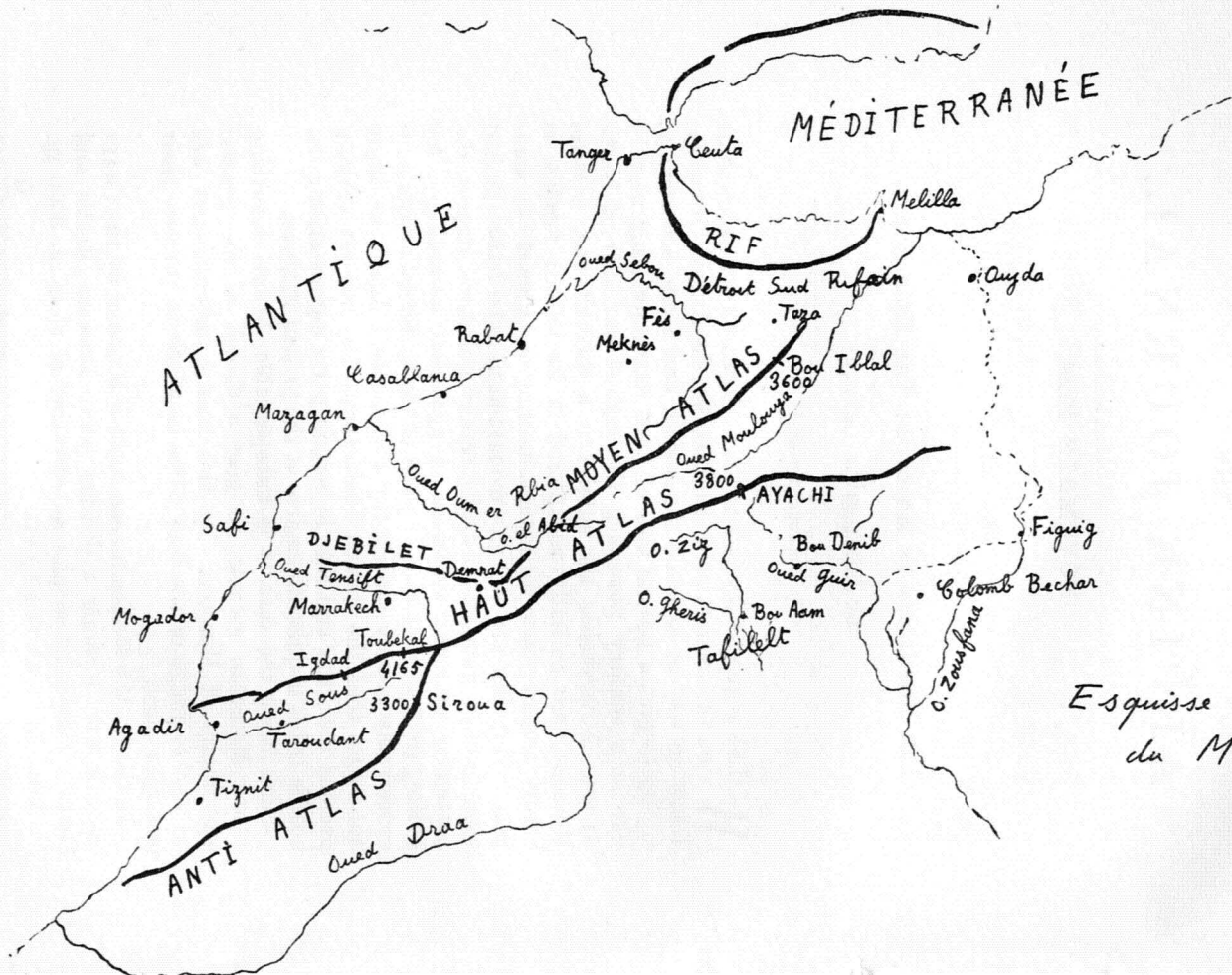
BY JACQUES DE LÉPINEY.

(Translated.)

WHEN requested by Colonel E. L. Strutt to write something on the mountains of Morocco for the ALPINE JOURNAL, I saw no way of avoiding the honour and I am, accordingly, trying to give a general idea of what mountaineering may be like in a country possessing the highest summits of North Africa. Nevertheless the subject is a difficult one, because Morocco, still partially unexplored in its loftiest regions, is hardly properly open for mountaineering or 'tourist' exploration. Very few are still the mountaineers who have climbed some peaks : immense districts, totally unknown, reserve the possibility of many surprises. I apologize, accordingly, for writing from a 'provisional' point of view ; future events may conceivably greatly modify my statements. Again, we must not forget that the French Protectorate has not yet entirely pacified the Atlas and that in certain parts ingress among the hostile tribes is quite impossible at the present moment.

Such being the case, it is indispensable, before describing a few Moroccan ascents, to give a sketch of the general topography of Morocco. By this means, mountaineers will be able to judge of the best parts in which to practise their favourite sport.

To the N., the Mediterranean coast is bounded by the CHAIN OF THE RIF, forming a distinct curve between Melilla and Ceuta. This chain attains an elevation of close on 3000 m.



Esquisse orographique
du Maroc

in some parts. It is separated entirely from the great undulations of the Atlas by the Southern-Rif defiles (the lower waters of the Oued Moulouya, gorge of Taza, valley and flats of Oued Sebou), which during a certain portion of the Neogene geological period connected the Mediterranean with the Atlantic before the existence of the Straits of Gibraltar. To the S. of the Southern-Rif defiles, close to Taza, commences the MIDDLE ATLAS, attaining one of its highest points at the Djebel Moussa ou Salak (*ca.* 3300 m.). The Middle Atlas, it has just been proved, does not connect with the High Atlas, but merely approaches it closely only to wander away again and extend itself to the W. by means of the little chain of Djebilet, to the N. of Marrakech and the Oued Tensift. We now come to the principal chain, the HIGH ATLAS, an enormous rampart separating fertile and populous Western Morocco from the Sahara-like desert districts. The direction of the High Atlas is approximately E.N.E.-W.S.W. from its commencement on the Algerian boundaries (high basin of the Oued Guir) to the extreme Atlantic corner of Cape Ghir. As a whole, it is extremely lofty and includes a number of massifs 3000-4000 m. in height; to the E. near Midelt, the Djebel Ayachi is more than 3800 m. Other very lofty summits rise to the S. of the upper waters of the Oued Moulouya, the Oued el Abid—an entirely unexplored district. Finally, to the S. of Marrakech tower grandly the Djebel Toubkal (4165 m.) and the Djebel Ouenkrim (4110 m.). Further W., again, the Djebel Igdad attains 3600 m.

Yet another group rises in the High Atlas itself, not far from the Djebel Toubkal, at the Djebel Siroua, an extinct volcano of 3300 m. This is the ANTI ATLAS, rapidly diminishing in importance before ceasing to exist near the mouth of the Oued Draa.

No mountaineers can boast of an intimate knowledge of these four groups, or chains, or are capable of exactly comparing them. Still it is quite certain that the most interesting peaks are found in the culminating part of the High Atlas, to the S. of Demnat and Marrakech, largely because they are far steeper and more snowy than any other. Following the example of the Marquis de Segonzac, President of the Moroccan Section of the C.A.F. and who made the first ascent of the Djebel Toubkal, mountaineers have kept largely to this part of the group, which has, moreover, the advantage of being within easy access of Marrakech. All have returned with indelible impressions of their ascents. They had started with many

misgivings, little thinking they would find anything of Alpine interest, but they soon had the pleasant surprise of discovering a new range bearing no resemblance to the mountains of Europe. Everything excited their admiration; the glens and gorges cleaving the slopes of the great peaks, covered with an unusual vegetation, dotted with curious native hamlets; the strange habits of the inhabitants, the flowery meadows of the foothills; finally, the ascents themselves up shattered ridges or gloomy rock walls so different from those of the Alps.

Unquestionably, mountaineers have not found there the shining visions of great glaciers, neither have they had to undergo the desperate struggles, redounding to the credit of Alpine sport, required in the ascents of the difficult peaks of the Mont Blanc, Pelvoux, or Pennine ranges. Yet they have experienced all the joys of marching across unknown and deserted terrain amidst surprising scenery; of scaling often trying rocks of unknown composition by routes affording every scale of astonishing variety.

THE TOUBKAL-OUENKRIM MASSIF.

The traveller arriving from Casablanca by the high-road debouching suddenly from the hills of Djebilet into the plain of Marrakech, will never forget the scene before him. Below him there lies the oasis of palms and date trees, a patch of green in the midst of the desert-like Haouz, swept by dust-laden and burning winds. From the oasis there bursts into sight Marrakech, the rose-coloured city, with its ancient walls of pise, its gardens, its mosques and minarets; while far away and on the horizon glitters the High Atlas with its snowy summits shining against the blue sky—Inghemer, Likoumt, Toubkal, and Ouenkrim.

From Marrakech there is another 50 kilometres by car before entering the mountains. The Berber village of Asni, dominated by the feudal-like 'Casbah' of its sheik, is situated among meadows and olive groves. At this spot the valley is still very open. The clear waters of the Oued Ait Mizane (or Oued Reraia) flow at a height of some 1000 m. through cultivated fields and thickets of sweet-smelling pink laurels. Near this place a series of glens radiate upwards towards the heart of the mountains. To the S.E., the valley of the Oued Imminen leads towards the Tizi¹ Tachdirt (3100 m.), a pass lying between

¹ Tizi = pass or col.—*J. de L.*

the Djebel Angour (3600 m.) and the Djebel Inghemer (3897 m.). Here the C.A.F. has constructed a small hut on the pass itself. The Refuge de Tachdirt (2300 m.), constructed by the *Syndicat d'Initiative* of Marrakech, is also a good starting-point for different ascents. Towards the S., by going up the valley of the Oued Reraia, the village of Around lying at 1900 m. is attained. Here also there is a hut belonging to the *Syndicat d'Initiative*. These lower valleys are fairly frequently traversed by tourists who can mount on mule back from Asni or Around to the Tizi Tachdirt. Henceforward, we are in the high, almost unknown, mountains, where still exist many virgin summits.

The Toubkal-Ouenkrim massif, the highest in North Africa, is the one which I propose to describe. It must be considered typical of mountaineering in the Atlas since the neighbouring ranges closely resemble it, while the more distant ones are either totally unknown or much inferior from a climbing point of view.

The massif's most notable characteristic is its rock composition. The rock, high up, at any rate, is volcanic lava resembling andesite ; lower down, towards its E. base, is found the crystalline rock corresponding to andesite, *i.e.* diorite. These rocks show, however, a certain variety of appearance and colour. Very dark in general, grey, pink, or green owing to secondary alterations, they show in parts much lighter coloured strata where the white straw-like streaks of plagioclase felspar crystals emerge. In other parts appears true vitreous or vesicular lava. But the Toubkal and Ouenkrim volcanoes were active at a very remote period ; geologists are of opinion that the eruptions date from the 'Permo Trias.' Since this distant epoch, the massif has undergone all manner of changes and has been so enormously moulded by erosion that the present shapes bear no analogy to active volcanoes. I have no intention of holding forth on geology, which my friend L. Neltner, geologist as well as active member of the G.H.M., will describe elsewhere far better than I am capable of ; I have only wished in these few lines to point out how greatly the massif differs from those usually visited by mountaineers. The rocks of the Toubkal and Ouenkrim are of a very grim aspect and of a quite special formation. They can often be scaled by very steep walls as handholds are usually abundant although not always firm ; these holds are soft to the touch, and one runs little risk of injuring either fingers or clothing.

Snow does not lie continuously throughout the year. From August to October or November, the summits are practically

bare, yet vegetation is not found above 3200 m., except as regards a few lightly-sown plants. The 'sub-alpine' parts are very barren, there exist but a few scattered forests of oaks, thuyas and junipers. The lower flora, between 2300 and 3200 m., are mostly very dry and prickly. In June-July they form a splendid yellow carpet intermingled with pink, blue and white. No traces of green appear since leaves are practically non-existent.

The high glens are inhabited by very poor Berbers, who live on thin scanty herds of sheep and still scantier pastures. These men are often good natural mountaineers and can be employed as porters. However, their methods and manner of carrying are at variance with recognized practice; they go very fast, but stop often and for long spells, and are quite unused to rucksacks on their backs. At first sight, their appearance is repellent, while their want of equipment does not inspire confidence. Their clothing consists of little else besides a great woollen cloak and hood, often ornamented with pretty embroidery. On their feet are fastened, about the ankle and instep, soles cut out of old motor-car tyres. A ring of turnips, worn *en bandolière* and of highly unpleasant odour, together with the inevitable and ever present dagger in the girdle, complete their equipment. These men, although extremely clever on rocks, or as pathfinders, are useless in cold at high altitude bivouacs or when moving over snow slopes. They were extremely astonished, while trying to turn snow slopes by awkward rocks, to perceive Maurice de Prandières execute standing glissades past them. They are very hospitable without being able to offer much since their hamlets are sometimes higher than 1900 m. (Around) or 2300 m. (Tachdirt).

One of the chief difficulties for a mountaineer in these regions is the complete lack of any detailed map, however crude. The Moroccan Geographical Service is, however, about to publish a map on a scale of 1 : 100,000, which ought to prove invaluable. The mountaineer nevertheless requires something more accurate in showing the ridges and watersheds, and, for this reason, with the assistance of my G.H.M. friends, Louis Neltner, Maurice de Prandières and André Stofer, I have drawn up an approximate sketch map, reproduced in these pages. This map only shows a small district; it is based on compass points and dependent on photographs for the flatter positions, and on clinometer readings, by Colonel Goulier, for the heights. The chief points (Djebel Ouenkrim *Sud*, Djebel Toubkal) have kindly been communicated to us as regards both position and height by the Moroccan Geographical Service.

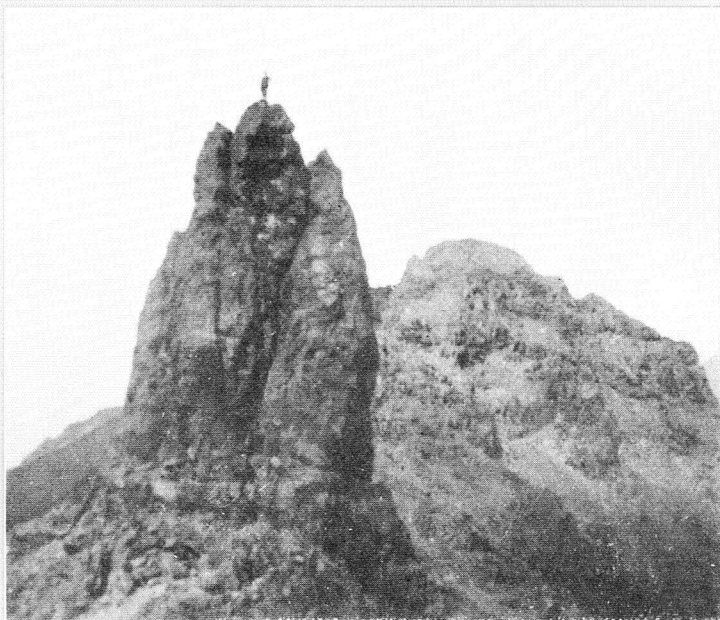


Photo. J. de Lépiney.

Le TADAT. AGUELZIM in background.

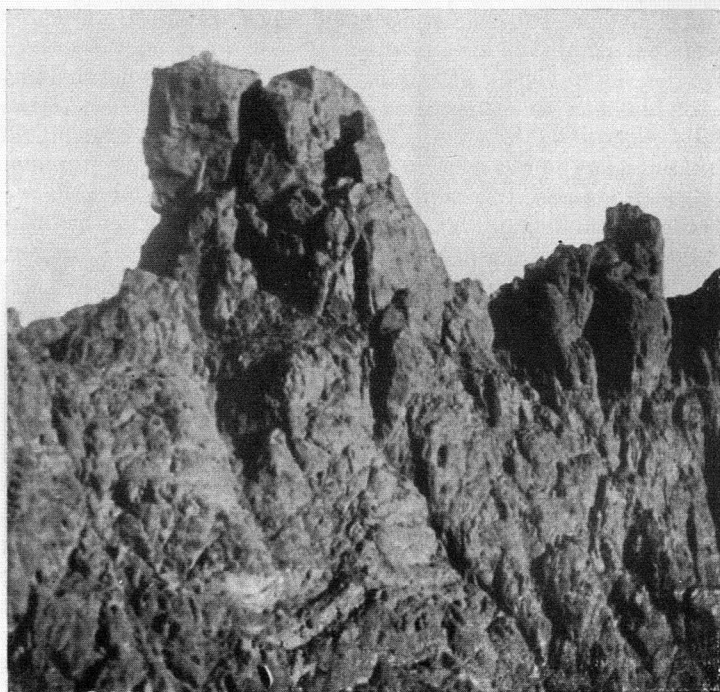


Photo. J. de Lépiney.

CLOCHETONS de L'OUENKRIM from the E.

ASCENTS IN THE TOUBKAL-OUENKRIM MASSIF.

To give an idea of mountaineering in the High Atlas, I propose to describe a few reminiscences of an expedition made with A. Stofer.

September 10, 1927, 05.00. We prepare to start from Marrakech. We are wearing climbing clothes and boots, and carrying our sacks. The heat is stifling; a burning wind is whirling the desert dust in all directions. The rose-coloured town is enveloped in a sand-laden cloud. We take the public car *en route* for Asni. It is not the moment to contemplate the desert scenery succeeding the oasis and date palms of Marrakech. All we have to think about is the protection of eyes and faces against the onslaught of wind and dust. We cover up our heads. An hour later the first spurs of the Atlas appear, cool and pleasant looking. The car mounts the Ait Mizane valley along the olive-laden banks of the clear Oued. We pass close by the village of Tahanaout nestling against limestone cliffs; above are snowy summits. Further on the valley contracts into a narrow ravine; the road is hewn out of the rock. A portal appears, the way opens out and we arrive at Asni. We drink aromatic tea in a native hut while mules are being got ready.

09.25. We leave the last remains of civilization. Our mules, urged on by their drivers, mount rapidly. For long we mount the Oued Reraia, steering S. Some crops, villages and thickets of *maquis* are followed by rocky gorges, more crops and woods. At 14.20 the Refuge of Around is attained, 1900 m., situated in an alluvial basin resembling a former lake. Opposite is the village of Around lying against a stone-shoot of moraine-like appearance. Up to this spot we had been moving through little more than foot-hills, fairly frequently visited by tourists. From below Around we have to go on foot into the mountains.

September 11, 08.00. Weather doubtful; with sacks and ice-axes we move further up the glen. After $1\frac{1}{4}$ hour's walk we attain Sidi Chamharouch, a wild spot where the river cuts through a gorge by a series of waterfalls among enormous boulders. The glen turns sharply and becomes very steep. Some traces of a path bring us to the amphitheatre of the Toubkal-Ouenkrim. On the Toubkal side are great rocky buttresses crowned by a shapely kind of tower; we christen this tower Tour de Sidi Chamharouch, *ca.* 3700 m., and amuse ourselves with the thought that cragsmen may find some fun in scaling it. We move on up the glen. At 12.45 we reach the last pastoral shelters of Ouanoums at a height of some 3000 m.

HAUT ATLAS

Toubkal

Echelle 1/40.000

Nord

vers Asnu



Around

1960

Sidi Chamarouch

vers le Tizi n'Taghrat 3720

Azib
2840

Ait Mizane

3751 Toubkal N-E

3750 Tour de Sidi Chamarouch

Dj S' Chamarouch 4000
4050 Dj Imouzzer
4000 Tizi Imouzzer

4165 Toubkal
4100 Aig. d'Ifni
3980

Tizi n'Toubkal

3730
3830

Tizi n'Ouanoum's

Amgharas n'Iglioua 4030

3900 Tizi n'Ouagan

Agoudel n'Mzier 4080

Ouenkrim Sud 4089

2360

Lac d'Ifni

3830 Ras Timguida

Grand Plateau
d'Ouenkrim 3990

Tizi Melloul 3940

3790 Tadat 3840

3850 3920 3 Clochetons 3880

Ouenkrim Nord 3990

Assif n'Timelkilt 4040

3820

Assif Ouenkrim

Ait Ouanoumen

The weather is unpleasant, clouds and a fierce cold wind ; is it perhaps snowing above ?

We make a long halt and then mount *débris* to the pass of Ouanoums, about 3500 m., 14.35 ; the col is on the watershed to the W. of the Djebel Toubkal. A serrated rocky *arête* leads up towards the Toubkal ; to the S.E. is a great steep and gloomy ravine at the base of which glitters the blue mirror of the Lake of Ifni. The scene is far different from an Alpine point of view at this time of the year or at similar heights. There is hardly any snow but the very dark volcanic crags have an attraction all their own, while visibility and the dryness of the air are characteristic of a considerable height.

Our plans are still undecided. Cheered up by the grandeur of the view and the weather improvement, we are in the mood for continuing and doing some scrambling. Three French ascents of the Djebel Toubkal have hitherto been accomplished, all by the N. slope. Maurice de Prandières and Jacques Balay, followed by Louis Neltner, have, however, accomplished the descent towards the Lake of Ifni, starting from the Tizi n' Toubkal. The finest southern route still remaining is unquestionably the S.E. *arête* on which rise the Aiguilles d'Ifni. This ridge is a long way from where we are ; we hope, however, to attain it by traversing the S. slopes of the Toubkal.

15.00. Quitting the little path winding away towards the Lake of Ifni, we begin traversing towards the E. Hardly any descent is necessary. The face is very steep, but the rocky steps are separated by easy ledges on which grows a scanty vegetation intermingled with *débris*, scrambling being only occasionally necessary. Crossing some couloirs and minor buttresses, we approach the S.E. *arête*. Night is coming on ; a bivouac becomes necessary. At 18.00, after a steep ascent, we attain a sort of open cave, in which we take up our quarters.

A most romantic night ! Lying between the overhanging face and the little wall of stones we have built up, we can perceive on the open side the wild mountain scenery with its striking outlines, all lit up by a marvellous moon. The temperature is about 0° (C.), low enough to make us shiver and remember the painful bivouacs of the Mont Blanc range.

September 12. At earliest dawn, 05.40, we make a fresh start, and, after 1 hour's march, attain a col in the S.E. *arête* at a height of some 3700 m. Soon after a rocky step obliges us to put on the rope. Chimneys and slabs, difficult in places, follow rapidly, but holds are usually good. The ascent is quite 'big' now ; rocks, snow, no signs of vegetation. The

arête is a kind of irregular hog's-back; it consists of high pillars seamed by gullies. The best way is often hard to find. In about 3 hours' time we reach the summit of the *Aiguille d'Ifni supérieure* (ca. 4100 m.), the only one with pretensions as a separate summit. After a short descent we come to another steep and rather troublesome step; I can remember one awkward traverse at the base of a perpendicular chimney black as ink, followed by some exposed buttresses.

At 10.35 we attain, at last, the broad summit of the *Djebel Toubkal*, 4165 m. [= 13,653 ft.], the highest mountain of North Africa. Thence, we are able to judge, for the first time, as a whole, of the appearance of the massif and we quickly agree that the finest expedition to be made is that of the arêtes of the *Ouenkrim*, formed of fine rocky teeth. The panorama, of enormous extent to the N., is concealed by numerous clouds to the S. After taking some compass points and clinometric measures, we begin the descent towards the *Reraia* glen. No detailed description is necessary. The *Djebel Toubkal* by its N. face is a very easy mountain, suitable for tourists rather than mountaineers. Many routes are possible by snowy, débris-strewn or grassy gullies seaming its minor ridges. After 2 short hours of descent the *Reraia* torrent is easily attained (13.20), then a long tramp by paths brings us back less easily to Around (16.40).

September 13. A necessary day of rest. We employ it in drawing in some of our sketch-map and in preparing our plans for the next day.

The ridge of the *Ouenkrim* ends to the N. at the *Aguelzim*, 3830 m.; between that summit and the *Ouenkrim*, S. peak, 4110 m.; forming its other extremity, there appear to be opportunities for interesting scrambles up virgin peaks. First comes a pointed tooth, *Tadat Ouenkrim*, well detached and rearing itself on the ridge, then the arête rises to the *Djebel Ouenkrim*, N. peak, 3990 m., reminding us by its shape of the *Pouce des Aiguilles Rouges*, *Chamonix*. The following summit is loftier still; it is the *Assif n' Timellilt*, 4050 m., connected with the N. peak of the *Ouenkrim* by a slender and much serrated arête; we specially note about half way three spires or steeples, conspicuous by their height and shape. From the *Assif n' Timellilt*, the skyline falls vertically to a col and then rises perpendicularly to an equally important peak, the *Djebel Amgharas n' Iglioua*, 4040 m., followed lastly by the massive, imposing outlines of the *Djebel Agoudel n' Mzier*, 4100 m., and of the S. peak of the *Ouenkrim*, 4110 m.

This chain has been hitherto but little explored. Balay and de Prandières have climbed the Amgharas n' Iglioua and Balay has also attained on another occasion a neighbouring summit, doubtless the Agoudel n' Mzier. Our intention is to follow the whole length of the watershed from the Tadat to the Ouenkrim, S. peak. This will most certainly take two days and a bivouac will be obligatory.

September 14. 08.00. Stofer and I leave Around by the well-known Reraia path. After an argument with the natives we take one porter with us. A long and weary tramp under a blazing sun to the neighbourhood of the Ouanoums shelters. Halt, 11.30 to 12.00, on the banks of a stream, seated on a damp carpet of moss. Thence, leaving the principal glen we plunge into a steep ravine full of large thistles. Walking is very unpleasant and progress slow, much hindered by great polished boulders well worthy of the vilest moraines. We leave the bed of the torrent to the left as soon as possible to take to some steep grass-grown rocks, where progress becomes easier. From a minor buttress we joyfully perceive a herd of *mouflons*; these graceful animals take to flight on our approach with swift and elegant bounds.

The ascent is long from the Reraia glen to the base of the Tadat, a difference in level of more than 800 m. However, the arrival on the crest rewards our efforts. Our porter, wearied by his sack and a 'regular' march to which he is unaccustomed, seems annoyed.

The Tadat (which means 'finger') rises quite close like a sharp arrow, black and polished; it is, however, nothing but a boulder hardly higher than the Aiguillette d'Argentière. We climb it without much trouble by a steep chimney. The view is fairly extensive, especially to the W.; we perceive far away Kasba Goundafa in the Oued n' Fis valley: to the E. and S. the view is concealed by the near mountains Tifnout and Toubkal, of massive aspect with but little snow at this time of the year. In fact, the N. face of the Toubkal is dull in summer, contrasted with its S. face whose savage barrenness is doubtless enhanced by want of snow.

We halt on the Tadat (14.20-15.00). There is still a very long way to go, but by easy broken rocks we attain the top of the Ouenkrim, N. peak, 3990 m. (15.40-16.15). Thence a fresh view is revealed. For the first time we can study the strange architecture of the 'plateau' of the Ouenkrim; it is a very high mountain, 3990 m., shaped like an immense table, the summit of which is a regular plain of several kilometres

square. The surface is covered with boulders split and broken by frost ; it is bounded by a vertical wall. A bent and undulating ridge, passing over the Tizi n' Melloul, connects the 'plateau' with the Djebel Assif n' Timellilt.

Leaving the Ouenkrim, N. peak, our arête traverse becomes at once interesting. After a short steep descent we attain the base of a splendid square tower, which we are delighted to climb, first 'backing up' a narrow chimney on its E. side, followed by an awkward traverse over diminutive ledges ; finally, an easier straight-up scramble. After the tower comes a slender and serrated knife-edge, next a more ordinary kind of ridge. At 17.45 we find ourselves in the deepest gap facing the group of enormous spires ('Clochetons') recognized before from the summit of the Toubkal. We put off their ascent and hunt about for a bivouac by descending a couloir some way, on the Reraia slope. Our porter, who ever since the Ouenkrim, N. peak, had left us at times to make long turning movements, seemed very tired. He grew cheerful on perceiving our descent and tried to persuade us to descend very low—in fact, as far as the dry shelters of Ouanoums. Great was his disappointment when we halted at the first trickle of water sufficient for drinking and cooking purposes. However, we were determined to keep near the arête of which we intended to resume the traverse on the morrow. We failed to find a sheltered spot and had to rest content with a stony and damp terrace fully exposed to the wind. Our native, too lightly clad, stuffed himself away in a corner and shivered all night. We were able to sleep a little, but were waked up by the bitter cold well before dawn. As on the slopes of the Toubkal, the temperature is about 0°. To warm ourselves we collect with difficulty a few roots and stems of dried plants and make up a fire.

September 15. By 05.20, in brilliant moonlight, we had left our bivouac. Our plans were first to scale the great spires ['Grands Clochetons']. As these appear impossible from the gap to the N., we steered in the dawn towards the gap to the S. Skirting the S. and uninteresting spire, we commenced the ascent of the two 'twin' central 'Clochetons'—the highest. By vertical but not difficult rocks we attained a kind of window between the twins. This very narrow 'window' forms a chimney which can be 'backed up' and is provided, moreover, with a few handholds. First, however, a more difficult crevice must be utilized. From the first peak, when attained, a sensational stride followed by an upward stretch brought us to the highest summit (06.15). To the N. is yet another prominent



Photo. J. de Lépiney.

ASSIF n' TIMELLILT, CLOCHETONS, OUENKRIM N. and
TADAT from N. slopes of TOUBKAL.



Photo. J. de Lépiney.

OUENKRIM S. AGOUEDEL n' MZIER and AMGHARAS n'
IGLIOUA from S.E. arête of TOUBKAL.

The Djebel Toubkal is seen end-on along the watershed. Its shape is massive and dark ; the angle is moderate on its Reraia slope, but very steep on the Oued Tifnout side. The outline of our S.E. arête of two days ago is very graceful with the deep-cut indentures of the Aiguilles d'Ifni. Nearer is a steeply stepped peak, the Djebel bou Ouszab ; across a gap we perceive the surface of the Lake of Ifni, farther away again are the cultivated parts of Tifnout and in the far distance the sands of the Sahara. More to the S. is the comparatively ' recent ' cone of the great volcano forming the beginning of the Anti Atlas, between the high Draa and the Sous. This is the Djebel Siroua explored by the geological authority, L. Gentil. Towards the S.E., the clinometer proves the superior altitude of the Djebel Ouenkrim, S. peak, a snowy rounded summit interspersed with broken boulders. To the N., the most noteworthy object is the gigantic ' plateau ' of the Ouenkrim, of which I have already spoken, crowning its bounding rocky cliffs. Next follows the long crest line just traversed, dominated by the Assif n' Timellit ; the view then plunges into the Reraia glen beyond which rise the ranges of the Likoumt and Tachdirt, with the plain of Marrakech. The general effect is strange ; the strong light playing on the very black mountains gives the most sensational effect—utter desolation, as even low down vegetation barely shows, while woods are virtually non-existent.

Having measured a few angles of direction and height, we climbed the Ouenkrim, S. peak (12.15–12.30), over débris slopes and snow at a gentle angle. A herd of *moufflons* is moving about at quite a short distance. The Ouenkrim, S. peak [4110 m. = 13,509 ft.], the second highest summit of North Africa, is of a very rounded form ; it is obviously easily climbed from every direction.

Our expedition ended here and there was nothing more than a long and tedious descent, by the Tizi n' Ouagan and the Reraia glen, to Aroud, 17.45. Stofer and I were both obliged to return to Rabat without further continuing our explorations.

MOUNTAINEERING IN THE HIGH ATLAS OF MOROCCO.

The obvious conclusions to be drawn from our expedition and those of Maurice de Prandières, Balay and other mountaineers in the Toubkal-Ouenkrim ranges are that the high mountains of Morocco do not most certainly provide any great summit whose ascent is really difficult. There is no question

of anything except short and self-sought scrambles. Difficulties must be searched for on pre-arranged routes, on arêtes or faces providing every scale from easy to impossible problems. In conclusion, more or less everywhere are to be found minor points, towers and steeples, well worthy of notice by cragsmen.

But mountaineering in the High Atlas will give wonderful impressions to its devotees. These almost unknown and desolate regions with their varied and grim outlook are of intense interest, while, in early summer, the vegetation between 2500 m. and 3500 m. strikes a bright and cheerful note with all its variegated colours. Moreover, the middle altitudes show glens and valleys inhabited by a primitive race of strangely clad natives living in picturesque villages.

[It is our duty to offer our grateful thanks to Monsieur de Lépiney for having found time to write this highly interesting, and, so far as the JOURNAL is concerned, unique account. It is much regretted that the paper was received just too late for insertion in the May number.—*Editor*, 'A.J.']

AIGUILLES DES DRUS AND LAUTERAARHORN.

Unpublished Letters from the late Miss Gertrude Bell.

Traverse of Aiguilles des Drus.

Wednesday, August 15, 1900.

WELL, as to the DRU. We started from the hotel at 9.30 on Monday night, Fuhrer,¹ Ernest Simond (a guide who has done the traverse) and I.

The moon rose as we got on to the Mer de Glace, wonderful it was, the great peaks looking like enchanted strongholds where no man might go. First, long beams shot up into the sky, pale shafts of light in the East, then the moon rose behind the shoulder of the Moine, a broken waning moon, and all the snows shivered into silver. We got up to the *gîte* at 1, and I lay down and thought—'car que faire dans un gîte à moins qu'on n'y songe?'—while the guides lighted the fire and heated coffee.

At 2.30 we were off up a long steep glacier, the snow pretty hard, a good deal of step cutting and we reached the rock at

¹ [Ulrich Fuhrer of Meiringen.—*Editor*.]